



# *Town of Walpole*

## *Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

### **PERSONNEL BOARD**

Michael McGrath, Chair  
Julie Lowre, Vice-Chair  
Jane Bergen  
Larry Pitman  
Jon Rockwood

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### **MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 8, 2020**

The Personnel Board met on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 beginning at 6:00pm via Zoom. The following members were present:

Michael McGrath, Chair  
Julie Lowre, Vice Chair  
Jane Bergen  
Larry Pitman  
Jon Rockwood

Also Present:  
Patrick Shield, Assistant Town Administrator  
Kristine Brown, Benefits Coordinator

### **Agenda Items:**

#### **CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. McGrath called the Personnel Meeting to order at 6:04pm

#### **UPDATE FROM TOWN ADMINISTRATION:**

*(Patrick Shield, Assistant Town Administrator filled in for Jim Johnson since Jim had another meeting he needed to attend).*

Mr. Shield, last Tuesday the Personnel Board met and spoke about Article 3, which was a bundle package – 3 year salary schedule for non-union bundled with the union contracts. Based on the feedback from the Personnel Board, the Town Administrator changed that from a 3 year salary schedule to a one year salary schedule. There will be stand-alone articles, one for each of the union contracts and one for the non-union personal.

Ms. Bergen, are you looking to give all of the Union contracts a 2% increase?

Patrick explained that each contract has a different cost of living adjustments for the 3 years.

Ms. Bergen wanted to know the range and stated that she has reached out to a couple of surrounding towns to see what they are doing. She stated that most of the Towns mentioned that Val Donohue had also reached out to them.

Mr. Shield, many of the cities & towns have proceeded with their budget that they had pre-COVID. We scaled back our FY21 budget. There is still so much unknown.

Mr. McGrath, in our conversation during the last Personnel Board meeting, Mr. Johnson said the warrant was closed. How come we are now able make these changes?

Mr. Shield explained that the warrant was still in draft form with the Town & KP Law. Jim spoke with Atty. Lauren Goldberg and explained the Boards concerns. Ms. Goldberg made the case that we could separate the articles because the Select Board had not signed it yet. Once the Select Board signs it will be final.

Mr. Pitman felt that in the unknown time, we do not know what the State is going to do. He was wondering if maybe it made sense to put all of these articles into the Spring Town Meeting. Employees could get their pay retro-actively. He struggles allocating 2% when we don't know what is going to happen.

Mr. Shield, right now we do not have any collective bargaining contracts in place. We need to take care of that ASAP. The purpose of these cost of living adjustments is not based on merit. We are trying to adjust these salaries to make sure that to positions are being paid appropriately. We want to make sure we have a competitive work force in Walpole.

Mr. McGrath, last week our biggest apprehension was that we didn't get to review the non-union salary schedule on a regular basis. I didn't feel like the money was the concern.

Ms. Bergen, it is not a huge amount & we do want to keep our job competitive. It is nerve-wracking with all of the unknowns in the future.

Mr. Shield stated that there was not a concern regarding the cost of living adjustment last meeting.

Mr. Pitman, let me clarify, I was talking with some residents this weekend. Several of them were asking why we are funding something when we don't know when the FYE 2021 state budget will be finalized and if we have the state funding.

Mr. Shield stated that Mr. Johnson did mention if there were issues regarding funding then we had the option of going back and adjusting the cost of living. If that does happen, we would come back to the Personnel Board.

Mr. Pitman asked if the Union Contracts are effective as of July 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. If so are those folks going to get their increases retro-actively.

Mr. Shield, they all expired on June 30<sup>th</sup>. We extended the previous contract. Those place holders are already in the budget.

Mr. Rockwood said he felt the board should rescind the Personnel Board's September 1<sup>st</sup> vote. Then we can vote on this new way it was presented to us. Once we rescind our vote from last week, we can move forward.

Motion moved by Mr. Rockwood, to rescind the Personnel Board's vote from September 1st, seconded by Ms. Bergen. Voted 5-0-0 (McGrath, Lowre, Bergen, Pitman, Rockwood)

Mr. McGrath asked if there was any issues with the way the article was revised.

Ms. Lowre stated when we voted last fall to split the Parks & Highway Superintendent position, it was represented that they wouldn't be requesting Assistant Superintendent positions in each of their departments.

Mr. Johnson was able to step away from his other meeting to state that those positions will stay on the schedule. He didn't remember there being an issue with those positions & they are not going to be filled at this time.

Ms. Bergen said that she remembers there being a conversation but she thought it was decided to leave those on the schedule but to not fill them for the time being.

Mr. McGrath, we will leave those positions on the schedule, Jim's explanation is sufficient.

Motion moved by Mr. Rockwood to accept the unnumbered articles from Mr. Johnson's memo to include the information as presented.

Mr. Shield, just to clarify, we have a motion for favorable action.

Mr. Johnson requested a roll call vote:

Mr. Rockwood said he would like to amend his motion to vote favorable action to accept the unnumbered articles from Mr. Johnson's memo to include the information as presented, seconded by Ms. Bergen.

**Roll call vote:**

*Mike McGrath:* YES

*Julie Lowre:* YES

*Jane Bergen:* YES

*Larry Pitman:* NO

*Jon Rockwood:* YES

Vote 4-1-0 favorable action.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Ms. Bergen mentioned that she called some surrounding Towns and thought that what Norwood was proposing was interesting. They are giving their employees 1% but are going to allow employees to buy back a week of vacation as a lump sum amount. The only employees who had an objection to that were the ones on Family Medical Leave.

Mr. Pitman thanked Jane for taking the initiative to reach out to surrounding communities. He wanted to know if Val has a contract

Mr. Shield said that she has been helping out on a part time basis and is an "at-will employee". Jim & Val work well together and will discuss her continuation of employment at the end of the year.

Ms. Bergen was concerned that the Town was missing out on unique ideas by not having a full time HR Administrator.

Mr. Shield explained that both he and Kristine Brown are a part of a Listserv with MMHR. There is a constant email chain and great ideas are passed along from one community to another. He mentioned that we can pass along some of the great ideas/thought that we find on the Listserv.

### **MINUTES:**

#### **a. Approval of Minutes from September 1, 2020**

Mr. McGrath stated that we will have to defer the vote of those minutes to the next meeting because they were not included in the Personnel Board packet.

Patrick wanted the Board to know that we are adding a Treasurer/Collector position to the schedule since Marilyn is retiring. Kris, Val & I are working on the job description. We want to ensure that the position we are advertising is actually what the position is. Perhaps we can meet on September 22<sup>nd</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup> to approve the job description.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

With there being nothing else to discuss

Motion moved by Mr. Pitman to adjourn the Personnel Board meeting, seconded by Mr. Rockwood. Voted 5-0-0 (McGrath, Bergen, Lowre, Pitman, Rockwood)

Respectfully submitted,

Kristine Brown

Minutes approved on: **September 29, 2020**